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Department of Recreation & Parks announces Deer Management Program for 2018-2019

ELLCOTT CITY, MD – The Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks has announced its fall/winter schedule for managing the deer population through bow and shotgun managed hunts. This effort helps maintain a stable, balanced white-tailed deer population in our parks where deer browsing has been shown to reduce biodiversity.

Since the program began in 1998, there has been an observable improvement in habitat quality and vegetation abundance in many of the parks where managed hunting and sharpshooting has taken place. The managed hunt program gives specially screened and selected hunters daytime access to various parks. This year's managed hunts will include a combination of bow and shotgun, and will take place from dawn until noon. Each park will be closed for all other uses during this time. Sharpshooting is now being limited statewide by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to February and March. A sharpshooting schedule will come out closer to the time.

The managed deer hunting schedule for 2018-2019 is as follows:

Alpha Ridge Park:

Bow & Shotgun January 10; February 20

Blandair Regional Park

Bow September 18 & 25; October 18; November 1

David Force Park:

Bow & Shotgun October 4, 17 & 31

Gorman Area (Middle Patuxent River and Kings Contrivance):

Bow & Shotgun October 10 & 24; November 14; January 23; February 7

High Ridge Park:

Shotgun October 9; November 13 & 20

Middle Patuxent Environmental Area:

Bow & Shotgun October 2, 16 & 30; November 12; January 8 & 22; February 6 & 19

Schooley Mill Park:

Shotgun November 19; January 9; February 21

West Friendship Park:

Shotgun October 25; January 24

Wincopin Trail Area of Savage Park:

Bow Hunting September 20 & 27; October 11 & 23

Deer population management programs, such as managed hunts and sharpshooting, are not possible in many areas of the County; therefore, the Department of Recreation & Parks has developed a Deer Management Reference Manual to help homeowners and gardeners live in harmony with white-tailed deer. The manual, which is available in all county library branches, contains information on the use of deer repellents, fencing to protect crops and property, how to avoid deer-auto collisions and, how to prevent contact with Lyme Disease carrying ticks. There is also information about the county's deer management program available on the Department's website at www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Recreation-and-Parks/Natural-Resources/Wildlife.

The Department of Recreation & Parks and the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service also can arrange to have experts on the topic speak to homeowner associations, schools or other groups. Other Recreation & Parks' deer management programs include an effort to reduce ticks on deer through the use of four-poster feeders which deliver an approved pesticide to deer attracted to a feeder baited with corn. Developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the devices have been shown to reduce tick populations by 90 percent or more. The Department is also collaborating with the University of Maryland and the U. S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service in an area-wide tick management study, which is investigating tick reduction practices and the movements of tick host species, such as deer and white-footed mice.

For more information on the deer management program, call the Department of Recreation & Parks at 410-313-1675.